Research Notes: Ellen Spollen / Spellman / Spaulding

(1844 - 1920)

Research Overview:

Ellen Spaulding is a direct ancestor whose life is unusually well documented across three surnames, multiple households, and several distinct phases of family formation. Born in Ireland in 1844, she arrived in the United States as a child and spent her early years in Boston within a blended household formed after her father's remarriage. Ellen's record is continuous but layered: she appears as a daughter, a wife twice widowed, and the matriarch of a large Iowa family. While key documents such as her birth record and first marriage record have not been located, her movements, marriages, and children are consistently preserved in census, vital, and obituary records.

Ellen's early life reflects the instability created by her father's death and the subsequent reorganization of the household under her stepmother, Margaret Mitchell. After Patrick Spollen died in 1857, Ellen appears in Boston records under the Spaulding surname, despite her father never having used that name. The adoption of Spaulding occurs during Ellen's adolescence and remains consistent through her adult life.

Ellen married Peter Clarke in the mid-1860s, likely in Boston or shortly after arriving in Iowa. By 1866, she was living in Clinton, Iowa, where she remained for the rest of her life. Within a short period, two daughters died in infancy. The record does not explain why Ellen left Boston or what connection brought her to Clinton, but other members of her family made the same move to that town.

After Peter Clarke died in 1874, Ellen remarried to James T. Sheppard and formed a second, larger household in Clinton. She bore multiple children with Sheppard, several of whom survived into adulthood, while others died

young. Census records from 1880 through 1910 show Ellen consistently embedded within a complex household that included children from both marriages. By the time of her death in 1920, Ellen was living with her son John Clarke and his family, and her obituary notes her surviving children and grandchildren spread across Iowa and neighboring states.

Although some early records are missing, Ellen's adult life and family are well documented. She remained in Clinton for more than fifty years, outliving both husbands and several children. Census records and vital records consistently place her within households that included children from both marriages and, later, adult children and grandchildren. Born in Ireland during the famine years, orphaned or separated from her mother, widowed twice, and marked by repeated child loss, Ellen nonetheless appears across decades as the central figure in a large, extended household; of all her daughters, only one survived to marry and have children. Ellen's life follows a series of abrupt turns rather than a single path; despite this, she remained present in the record across decades.

Speculative Narrative:

Intentionally left blank

Time Line:

7 Nov 1844 - Birth at Roscommon, Ireland.[1]

1846 - Birth of brother W Michael Spellman at Roscommon, Ireland.[2]

30 Oct 1849 - Arrival at Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. [3]

12 Jul 1851 - Birth of half-brother Thomas Henry Spellman at Haverhill, Essex, Massachusetts. [4]

3 Feb 1853 - Birth of half-sister Mary E Spellman at Haverhill, Essex, Massachusetts. [5]

This is the only census in which Ellen appears with her father alive and the full blended household present.

[1] "Massachusetts State Census, 1855", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQ4T-4WY: Sat Mar 09 10:35:38 UTC 2024), Entry for Patrick Spelman and Margerette Spelman, 1855.

[2] "Massachusetts State Census, 1855", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQ4T-4WY: Sat Mar 09 10:35:38 UTC 2024), Entry for Patrick Spelman and Margerette Spelman, 1855.

[3] Boston Passenger Lists, 1820-1943; he National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Series Title: Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1820-1891; Record Group Title: Records of the

[4] "Massachusetts, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1626-2001", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q29G-KG9Y: Thu Mar 07 21:31:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Thomas Spelman and Patrick, 12 July 1851.

[5] "Massachusetts State Vital Records, 1841-1925", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FXCC-P11: Thu May 23 01:42:13 UTC 2024), Entry for Mary Spillman and Patrick Spillman, 2 Feb 1853.

1855 - Massachusetts State Census at Haverhill, Essex, Massachusetts. [6]

Patrick Spelman, 34

Margarette Spelman, 34

Ellen Spelman, 12

Michael Spellman, 10

Thomas Spelman, 4

Mary Spellman, 2

16 Jul 1857 - Death of father Patrick Spollen (1820 - 1857)

1860 - US Census at Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. [7]

Margaret Spaulding, 40

Thomas Spaulding, 9

Ellen Spaulding, 16

Mary Spaulding, 7

Surname usage shifts between Spaulding and Spellman in Boston records during this period.

Mid 1860s - Marriage to Peter Clarke (1829 - 1874

We do not know how the young Ellen met Peter Clarke, and no marriage record has been found. Soon after their marriage, Ellen left Boston, spent a short time in California, and then settled in Iowa.

[6] "Massachusetts State Census, 1855", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQ4T-4WY : Sat Mar 09 10:35:38 UTC 2024), Entry for Patrick Spelman and Margerette Spelman, 1855.

[7] "United States Census, 1860", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZC2-GZL : Mon Jul 08 10:12:10 UTC 2024), Entry for Margaret Spaulding and Thomas Spaulding, 1860.

11 Jul 1866 - Birth of daughter Maggie Clark (1866 - 1867) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[8]

10 Sep 1866 - Death of daughter Maggie Clark (1866 - 1867) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[9]

17 Nov 1868 - Birth of daughter Mary F Clarke (1868 - 1869) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[10]

5 Nov 1869 - Death of daughter Mary F Clarke (1868 - 1869) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[11]

11 Dec 1869 - Birth of son John Leo Clarke (1869 - 1930) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[12]

1870 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[13]

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[8] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L8D : 29 May 2020), Maggie Clarke, 1867; Burial, , ; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[9] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L8D : 29 May 2020), Maggie Clarke, 1867; Burial, , ; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[10] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L86 : 29 May 2020), Mary F. Clarke, 1869; Burial, , ; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[11] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L86: 29 May 2020), Mary F. Clarke, 1869; Burial, , ; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[12] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVKK-752C: 13 September 2020), John Leo Clarke, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 47008250, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[13] "United States Census, 1880", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD2Q-3H5 : Thu Mar 07 12:32:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Jas. Sheppard and Ellen Sheppard, 1880.

Peter Clark, 39

Ellen Clark, 27

John Clark, 3

John Clark, 21

24 Dec 1873 - Birth of son Peter Vincent Clarke (1873 -1919) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[14]

18 Jul 1874 - **Death of son husband Peter Clark (1829 - 1874)** at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[15]

3 Sep 1877 - Marriage to James T Sheppard (1836 - 1917) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[16]

6 Jul 1878 - Birth of daughter Elizabeth Sheppard (1878 - 1906) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[17]

5 Apr 1880 - Birth of daughter Helen Gertrude Sheppard (1880 - 1906) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[18]

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[14] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVKY-BTW4: 16 August 2023), Peter Vincent Clarke, ; Burial, Hillside, Cook, Illinois, United States of America, Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery; citing record ID 53215952, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[15] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVV3-XXFJ: 10 June 2021), Peter Clarke, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 5949153, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[16] "Iowa, County Marriages, 1838-1934", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XJNV-YQT: Sat Jul 06 03:16:49 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shepperd and Ellen Spaulding, 13 Sep 1877.

[17] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L8T: 29 May 2020), Elizabeth Sheppard, 1906; Burial, , ; citing record ID, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[18] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVR-LMZC: 11 January 2022), Gertrude Helen Sheppard Laughlin, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 24503372, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

1880 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[19]

Jas. Sheppard - head of household, white, male, born ?, age 44, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland, sawmill, owns home

Ellen Sheppard - wife, white, female, born ?, age 36, mother of 6 children, 4 living, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Joseph Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 18, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Mary Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 15, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Ellen Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 14, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

John Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 13, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

James Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 12, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Eliza Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 2, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Gertrude Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 2/12, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

John Clark - step son, white, male, born ?, age 13, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Peter Clark - step son, white, male, born ?, age 7, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

[19] "United States Census, 1880", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD2Q-3H5 : Thu Mar 07 12:32:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Jas. Sheppard and Ellen Sheppard, 1880.

24 Nov 1882 - Birth of son Charles Ames Sheppard (1882 - 1941) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[20]

21 Feb 1885 - Birth of son Thomas Edward Sheppard (1885 - 1955) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[21]

25 Oct 1885 - Birth of daughter Hannah T. Sheppard (1885 - 1886) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[22]

1885 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[23]

James Shepord, 47

Ellen Shepord, 40

Joseph Shepord, 23

Mary Shepord, 21

John Shepord, 12

James Shepord, 17

Lizzie Shepord, 7

Gertie Shepord, 5

Charles Shepord, 3

Thomas Shepord, 0

[20] "United States, Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WQBH-Y8MM: Sun Mar 10 04:44:46 UTC 2024), Entry for Charles Ames Sheppard, 22 April 1919.

[21] "Iowa, County Births, 1880-1935", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XVZ6-74K: Sat Aug 31 06:00:45 UTC 2024), Entry for Shepherd and James Shepherd, 21 Feb 1885.

[22] Iowa, U.S., Births and Christenings Index, 1800-1999; "Iowa Births and Christenings, 1830–1950." Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2009, 2010. Index entries derived from digital copies of original and compiled records.

[23] "Iowa State Census, 1885", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VTS4-J81: Sat Jul 20 03:17:56 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shephard and Ellen Shephard, 1855.

17 May 1886- Death of daughter Hannah T. Sheppard (1885 - 1886) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[24]

29 Oct 1886 - Birth of daughter Theresa Sheppard (1886 - 1899) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[25]

1887? - Death of brother W Michael Spellman (1846 - 1887) at Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts.[26]

1895 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[27]

James Shepord, 47

Ellen Shepord, 40

Joseph Shepord, 23

Mary Shepord, 21

John Shepord, 12

James Shepord, 17

Lizzie Shepord, 7

Gertie Shepord, 5

Charles Shepord, 3

Thomas Shepord, 0

Hannah Shepord, 78

[24] Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L8Y: 10 June 2021), Ellen Frances Spaulding Sheppard, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 32392175, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[25] "Iowa, County Births, 1880-1935", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XVZ6-DG9: Sat Aug 31 04:43:08 UTC 2024), Entry for Shepherd and James Shepherd, 25 Oct 1886.

[26] Death of brother W Michael Spellman

[27] " "Iowa State Census, 1895", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VTS4-J81: Sat Jul 20 03:17:56 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shephard and Ellen Shephard, 1895.

15 May 1899 - Death of half-sister Mary E Spaulding (1846 - 1887) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[28]

17 May 1889 - Death of daughter Theresa Sheppard (1886 - 1899) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[29]

1900 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[30]

James Sheppard - head of household, white, male, age 64, born ?, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Ellen Sheppard - wife, white, female, age 54, born ?, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

John L Clark - stepson, white, male, age 32, born ?, married x years, born Iowa, parents born Ireland, 32

1905 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[31]

James Shepard

Ellen Shepard

17 May 1889 - Death of daughter Elizabeth Sheppard (1878 - 1906) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[32]

[28] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVKY-KHMC: 14 July 2020), Mary E. Spaulding Monroe, 1899; Burial, , ; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[29] "Iowa, County Death Records, 1880-1992", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVJP-PJLR: Fri Mar 08 18:58:35 UTC 2024), Entry for Teresa Sheppard, 17 May 1899.

[30] "United States Census, 1900", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M9KW-3WX: Tue Jul 23 15:08:32 UTC 2024), Entry for James Sheppard and Ellen Sheppard, 1900.

[31] Iowa State Census, 1905

[32] "Iowa, Death Records, 1904-1951", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPLV-VTJC: Sun Mar 10 11:20:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Elizabeth Sheppard and James Sheppard, 11 March 1906.

1910 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[33]

James Shepard - head of household, male, white, age 74, married, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Ellen F Shepard - wife, female, white, age 64, married, can read, can write, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

John Clark - stepson, male, white, age 43, widower, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

James Sheppard Jr - son, male, white, age 42, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland, 42

26 Jul 1917 - Death of husband James T Sheppard at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[34]

1920 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[35]

John L Clarke - head, rents, male, white, age 50, married, can read, can write, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Elsie M Clarke - wife, female, white, age 30, married, can read, can write, born Iowa, parents born ?

John M Clarke - son, male, white, age 1, can't read, can't write, born Iowa, parents Iowa

Ellen F Sheppard - mother, female, white, age 75, a widow, born Ireland, parents born Ireland, immigrated ?, naturalized?

[33] "United States Census, 1910", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ML1J-S8J: Tue Jul 23 14:10:28 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shepard and Ellen F Shepard, 1910.

[34] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVV-Q4WG: 10 June 2021), James T Sheppard, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 23419829, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[35] Ellen Spaulding Sheppard's obit

9 Jun 1920 - Death in Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[36]

June 1920 - Obituary

Mrs. Ellen Frances Sheppard, age 75 years, passed away this morning at 5:15 at her home, 611 Seventh avenue, after gradually declining health for some months. Last evening, she sat on the porch until 8 o'clock, watching her little grandson at his play, who was assisted into the house and to bed about 9 o'clock. Toward midnight, a physician was called, but as she was resting quietly, no fears were felt as to her immediate demise. She passed away as she slept.

Ellen Frances Spaulding was born in Ireland on November 7, 1844, and came to America as a child, spending her early years in Boston. She came to Iowa in 1866 and has made her home in Clinton since that time.

There are left to mourn the devout Christian mother, one daughter, and five sons. J.L. Clarke of Clinton, Mrs. J.A. Laughlin of Elkhart, Indiana, Charles Sheppard of Humphrey, Nebraska, Thomas Sheppard of Rochester, Minnesota, James and John Sheppard of Clinton, as well as many grandchildren, and a brother, Thomas Spaulding, also of this city.

June 1920 - Burial at St. Mary's Cemetery at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[37]

[36] Ellen Spaulding Sheppard's obit

[37] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK3-8L8Y : 10 June 2021), Ellen Frances Spaulding Sheppard, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 32392175, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.